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THE MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

MADERA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

Volume I - Number 1 January, 1961

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 1960

A review of the activities of your Society is now due, and as no Historian was appointed for this year, I will assume the task. Doris Foster brought our History and Scrap Book up to 1959 - a work of real merit. She felt unable to cope with this past year and asked to be excused.

Perhaps I had better start with the fall of "59" as I acted as program chairman for the last fall meeting. We met at Lucca's Restaurant, the speaker being Dr. Raymund F. Wood of Fresno State College. His subject was "Early Institutions and Personalities of North Fork". He told us of Mrs. Shinn, the wife of the first forest supervisor of the Sierra National Forest, and the women who worked in the North Fork Indian Mission. North Fork was well represented in attendance at the meeting and we all enjoyed a most interesting and informative talk.

Circumstances delayed the annual meeting until March 8, 1960, held at Lucca's Restaurant. Officers and Directors were elected as follows:

President.....Nathan C. Sweet
Vice-President.....Maud Lindeman
Secretary.....Harry Vollborn
Treasurer.....Yolanda Brunetti
Directors.....Rintha Robbins,
Isabel Tipton, Sanford Grover,

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THE "IRON HORSE" ADVANCES

compiled by

GUY CROW

Let us travel back a few years and find ourselves reliving some of those historic railroad construction days advancing through San Joaquin Valley.

FEBRUARY 7, 1872 - Arthur Brown, Supt. of Bridges of the Central Pacific Company, is preparing for the erection of the San Joaquin River bridge with a large force of men.....The truss bridge is framed and ready for shipment at the company's yard in Oakland as soon as the railroad reaches the stream.....Graders are preparing the roadbed in the county and, weather favoring, the grade will be completed as far as the San Joaquin River by middle of March. Surprise was expressed if the cars were not running by first week in June.

FEBRUARY 14, 1872 - The SNELLING ARGUS reports the Visalia division of Central Pacific is advancing southward and is completed to a point near the Chowchilla River southern boundry of Merced County. At the "mile-rate-a-day" of progress, the road to Visalia would be completed about the last of May.

FEBRUARY 28, 1872 - Pile drivers

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Agnes Bradford, Frank Secara.

The second quarterly meeting was held on April 20, 1960, at Lucca's Restaurant. Louisiana Clayton Dart, Curator of the San Luis Obispo County Museum and District Vice-President of the California Conference of Historical Societies, was the speaker. Mrs. Dart related the history and development of the San Luis Museum and discussed the various exhibits which were illustrated by slides. Considerable interest was generated and many questions asked. We were honored to have as our guest Miss Ruth Paulding, President of the San Luis Obispo County Historical Society, who accompanied Mrs. Dart on the trip.

A week later a delegation from the Society led by Sanford Grover met with the Madera County Supervisors to discuss a Madera County Museum. A good argument was presented by the group, the supervisors seemed interested and cooperative, but up to the present time no action has been taken. However, the project is not dead and may possibly come to active life when least expected.

"PASEAR"

On June 19, 1960, a trip was scheduled for members, guests and all persons interested to points of historic importance in eastern Madera County. The group, headed by Sanford Grover, met at Raymond and then proceeded up the "Old Stage Road" to the Summit House, now the home of Mrs. Arthur Denny. After, on to the former site of Grub Gulch - old residents pointing out where the various buildings had stood. Next stop was the home of Hazel Hawk Elam, formerly Canary Cottage and before that the blacksmith shop of John Shay, author of Twenty Years in the Backwoods of California. Ahwahnee followed and the Grave of Lieutenant Skene where Sanford Grover related the pertinent facts concerning that early-day tragedy and then on to the Al Legros Home and Museum.

At Oakhurst we all gathered in the little chapel in Oak Hill Cemetery where Mrs. W.L. Clithero spoke on the history of the chapel after which we went down the hill to the "Old Jail", now located in the Holiday Village Motel.

The "Pasear" terminated with lunch at Bass Lake where members were privileged to hear a talk by Dr. Ergo Majors, grandson of Alexander Majors who was the man upon whom the financing of the Pony Express fell most heavily. Our Bass Lake host and hostess were Mr. & Mrs. J. Frank Martin who extended an invitation for all to join them on a boat ride on the "Bass Lake Queen".

At the invitation of Coarsegold Community Association, first fall meeting was held September 23, 1960, at Coarsegold Community Hall. The speaker was Prof. M.A. Grosse of Fresno State College and was an illustrated lecture on early-day logging in Madera and Fresno Counties. As the speaker has participated in this industry and had taken many of the pictures himself, it was very much a first-hand account and a fine contribution to our local history. The warm hospitality of the Coarsegold people was much appreciated and I hope they will ask us to come again soon.

Our last meeting was held No-

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vember 17, 1960, at Lucca's Restaurant. Harold Schutt of Lindsay spoke to us about Chief Sequoia for whom the big trees were named and who invented an alphabet for his people - the Cherokee Indians. Mr. Schutt is a Past-President of the Tulare County Historical Society and the State Conference of Historical Societies and at present is Director of Publications for the Conference.

SOCIETY PUBLICITY

Several organizations have requested talks from a member of the Historical Society to which I have responded. On July 30, 1960, I spoke to the Madera Lions Club on museum plans and preparations. Helpful publicity followed, August 30, 1960, in the MADERA DAILY TRIBUNE By Barbara Brown, DAILY TRIBUNE Staff Writer. The FRESNO BEE, MADERA RECORD and SIERRA STAR have also contributed thankful news of the Society.

August 28, 1960, was the occasion of a short talk on early county history given at the Vesper Service of Bass Lake Community Church and again, on November 10, 1960, I spoke in a like vein to the North Fork Women's Club. My thanks to these organizations for their interest in our society.

MUSEUM PROGRESS

Now let us bring the record up-to-date on progress made in the museum field. Through the interest and cooperation of Mr. & Mrs. Norberg of Oakhurst, Mr. & Mrs. Enlow of North Fork, and Mr. & Mrs. Conway of Coarsegold, exhibits have been set-up in their establishments. Others have expressed their willingness to house an exhibit and we expect to take advantage of these opportunities as soon as the equipment can be provided. Once set up, the only extra work involved is the monthly moving of the exhibit.

The first exhibit consisted of Pre-historic Indian artifacts from Bass Lake provided by J. Frank Martin and Roger Dupsyk. The second was called "Products of the Forge" and was a variety of hand-wrought articles from many sources. Number three was "Oldtime Kitchen Utensils". This exhibit included gifts to the Society of a still-yard from Mrs. Kit Ervine, a cast iron tea kettle from Manuel Chalfont, the other items being loans.

The fourth display was "Spurs, Bits, and Brands", all loans and is equipment used by a range rider. "Miner's and Prospector's Tools" were the fifth group. Interesting features included a bullion mold used at the Texas

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MADERA COUNTY HISTORIAN

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"IRON HORSE" ADVANCES (Continued)

are at work on the bridge across the Fresno River and graders on both sides of the stream preparing the road bed. Track is laid, construction trains running to the south side of Ash Slough, six miles south of the Chowchilla River, and progress continuing at our "mile-rate-a-day". The Chowchilla bridge is a temporary one. THE EXPOSITOR was informed that at least 2000 laborers, white and Chinese, are on construction and prophesied that the "Iron Horse" will be "snorting and panting on the banks of the San Joaquin River before the end of the month."

MARCH 6, 1872 - It is stated that the rails of the San Joaquin Valley branch of the Southern Pacific will be completed to the San Joaquin River within two weeks. It is learned that the railroad has bought two sections of land immediately south of the river for a townsite there and talk is arising among Millerton businessmen of moving to it.

MARCH 8, 1872 - Track completed to the Fresno River on March 11th and bridge also. A switch will be installed south of the Fresno River for freight cars and goods may be hauled to that point from Merced. Mule teams are hauling the river bridge timbers from the end of the road. "The traveling is horrible and twenty-four mules were attached to a timber hauling wagon."

MARCH 27, 1872 - Locomotive crossed the San Joaquin River on Saturday, the 23rd and track-laying south of it begun.

EPITAPH - our railroad had now reached what was to become Berendo. Leroy Dennis, former sheriff, erected a store and hotel, June, 1872, and on February 12, 1873, the first United States Post Office in what is now Madera County established. Berendo is now a relic of the past.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Continued)

Flat Mine with a replica of the bullion in pot metal loaned by William Melvin and placer gold dust loaned by Mr. Conway.

Exhibit number six consisted of old tools from many sources; number seven was Indian bead work and baskets, still on display at Coarsegold. Number eight is at North Fork and consists of articles connected with lighting by candles; and number nine at Norberg's is time pieces - the highlight of which is a 170 year-old, key wind, chain drive English watch still in timekeeping condition. Mrs. W.L. Clithero has handled captions and arrangements until recently when other duties have prevented her from continuing.

In preparation are oil lamps, old newspapers, books, and photographs. If the exhibits already shown were to be used in a museum, it would require at least 50 lineal feet of showcase space to display them. A record has been kept of all the items and they will be available if needed in the future. While the material is suitable for permanent use in a building for that purpose where tourists would be the principal viewers, our present aim is to amuse and instruct our own people.

Nathan C. Sweet
President

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